

GOP Battles With No End in Sight

BY MOLLY BALL

WASHINGTON—As a fractious week at the Capitol came to a close with the position of speaker of the House still vacant, a sense of fatalism descended on the Republican majority after the ejection of the post's previous occupant, Kevin McCarthy, without a plan or successor in place to follow him.

One Republican congressman, freshman Mark Alford

from Missouri, announced he was turning to prayer. Another, Kelly Armstrong of North Dakota, suggested trial by combat. Andy Ogles of Tennessee sent his colleagues a letter on formal stationery proposing they all be locked in a room until they came to consensus. Mike Collins, elected last year to represent the Atlanta exurbs, suggested a lottery—with the loser forced to serve as speaker.

"If people are looking for a

perfect system," Republican Dusty Johnson of South Dakota said in what was an understatement, "they shouldn't be looking at the U.S. House right now."]

Outside the Capitol, multiple crises bid for lawmakers' urgent attention: a new war in the Mideast, an ongoing one in Europe, with U.S. military com-

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U.S. NEWS

Jordan Gets Speaker Nod but Faces Hurdles

WASHINGTON—House Republicans chose Rep. Jim Jordan (R., Ohio) as their nominee for speaker, but it remained uncertain whether the fiery ally of former President Donald

By *Siobhan Hughes, Katy Stech Ferek, Lindsay Wise and David Harrison*

Trump could avoid the fate of Rep. Steve Scalise, who also won an internal ballot but then failed to win enough broad party support to claim the gavel.

The speaker post has been vacant—and the House paralyzed—since a small group of Republican rebels last week engineered the historic ouster of Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.). The GOP turmoil comes as Congress faces a mid-November deadline to fund the government. The fighting in Israel and Gaza has also added more urgency to restoring House operations.

In a 124-81 vote Friday, Republicans picked Jordan, who chairs the Judiciary Committee, over Rep. Austin Scott of Georgia, a low-profile Republican who made a last-minute decision to run as the candidate for Jordan critics.

In Friday's tally, Jordan didn't receive the 217 votes needed to assure Republicans of winning a majority of votes on the House floor. While that was impossible with only about 209 Republicans present, the results also pointed to the party's broader problem: In the narrowly divided 221-212 House, Republicans can lose no more than four votes if all law-



Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, center, arrived at a House Republican meeting Friday as the party worked to select a new speaker.

makers show up and vote for an individual to serve as House speaker.

After the nomination vote, Jordan then called for a second secret ballot to directly test GOP support for his run on the House floor. In that vote, he got the support of 152 colleagues, with 55 against.

House Republicans will now break for the weekend, with a plan to bring a vote on elevating Jordan to the speakership once they get back.

"I think I can unite the con-

ference," Jordan said, with supporters pointing to his popularity among grass-roots Republicans.

"A lot of people [are] still upset with a variety of occurrences over the course of this Congress," said Rep. Dan Bishop (R., N.C.). "But the sense in that room was palpable that we've crested and we're moving in a new direction," he said.

Scott, Jordan's opponent in the conference vote, said he would back Jordan, but others,

including Florida Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart and Carlos Gimenez, said they would continue to oppose him.

Asked if Jordan could whittle down his opposition to four or fewer votes, Rep. Jodey Arrington (R., Texas) said, "That's a tall order for anyone."

Waiting in the wings in the event that Jordan can't reach a majority of the House's 433 members are other Republican candidates. Speculation centered on people including Rep.

Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, chair of the conservative Republican Study Committee, and House Majority Whip Tom Emmer of Minnesota along with Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana, the vice chairman of the House Republican conference.

But some influential Republicans were increasingly talking about another option: empowering Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry (R., N.C.), currently acting as a caretaker, for a finite period of time so that he could advance must-

pass legislation. Democrats would likely need to join with Republicans to give McHenry such powers.

"Patrick should have that power right now and do the work we have to do and at the same time have the elections," McHenry told reporters on Friday.

Also Friday, Democratic leaders of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus sent a letter to McHenry proposing that his powers be expanded to allow him to bring a narrow set of legislation up for a vote, with his authority limited to 15-day increments. The bills would cover aid to Ukraine and Israel, extending through Jan. 11 a continuing resolution that is funding the government, and committee and floor consideration of the eight fiscal 2024 appropriations bills that have not yet cleared the House.

Speaking to reporters, Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D., N.Y.) called Jordan "the chairman of the chaos caucus" and invited Republicans to pursue a bipartisan option. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D., Ill.) posted on social media: "There's nothing spookier this Friday the 13th than the House of Representatives heading into yet another weekend without a Speaker."

Democrats have said that they wouldn't step in to bail out Republicans and that the party had to find a speaker on its own. Still, the potential rise of Jordan, who was in close contact with Trump during his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, could put pressure on some Democrats to step in for another candidate.

GOP House Struggles to Function

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 commitments to both still unfilled. Just over a month remained of the government funding for which McCarthy, whose name still hung over the speaker's office suite 10 days after he was forcibly ejected from it, was martyred. None of these needs can be met without a functioning House.

Yet inside the building, Republicans continued to feud with no end in sight Friday.

Heading into the latest of a series of family-feud convales, Rep. Greg Murphy of North Carolina wrote on social media that he was looking forward to the relative pleasure of an upcoming root canal.

McCarthy's No. 2, Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, had proved no more able than McCarthy to rally the confer-

ence behind him. The next contender to put his name in the ring, Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, managed about 60% support on a secret ballot Friday against Rep. Austin Scott, a back bencher from Georgia, who said he didn't actually want to be speaker but felt there should be an alternative.

After another secret-ballot vote revealed a sizable number of Republicans wouldn't back Jordan on the House floor, the party broke for the weekend in exasperation.

"The House GOP conference is broken," Rep. Lloyd Smucker of Pennsylvania wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Rep. Brian Mast, a Republican from Florida, said: "Leaders lead. And that's not taking place." Whoever eventually wins the speakership will immediately face a daunting workload. The Biden administration plans to seek a new tranche of military aid to Israel in light of the recent Hamas attacks. Another pending military request, for additional aid to Ukraine, was sidelined in the government-funding battle and faces oppo-

sition from many Republicans. And on Nov. 17, the government will shut down if new spending bills, which many in the GOP want to see dramatically pared back, aren't passed.

A shutdown seemed inevitable on the evening of Sept. 30, when McCarthy suddenly proposed a vote to fund the government at previously agreed-upon levels for 45 days. The ploy might have been aimed less at keeping the government open than at blaming a shutdown on the Democrats, but the opposition party promptly thwarted McCarthy's gambit by voting for it en masse. This prompted the rebels' ringleader, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, to pull the trigger on a motion to vacate. McCarthy called the vote almost immediately, making no overtures to the Democrats. And so, despite having the support of 96% of House Republicans, McCarthy was ousted in a 216-210 vote, and the

House was without a speaker.

Tempers frayed, the House members went home to cool off for the weekend, but things were no better when they returned. Two candidates, Jordan and Scalise, declared their interest in the speaker position. Scalise, the current majority leader, would seem to be the next in line, but he and McCarthy have long had a chilly, unstated rivalry, and McCarthy and his allies sought to undercut him behind the scenes.

Jordan, a Freedom Caucus co-founder and longtime bomb-thrower whom former Speaker John Boehner once called a "legislative terrorist," secured the endorsement of Donald Trump after the former president and current front-runner for the 2024 GOP nomination briefly flirted with cannonballing into the contest himself. Republican members gath-

ered in a Capitol hearing room Wednesday morning without staff or phones. After a couple of hours, a smattering of applause could be heard from outside, and soon they emerged to say that Scalise had prevailed in a vote of 113 to 99 to determine the conference's choice. But with 217 votes needed on the House floor, he was still far from the threshold for success, and numerous members immediately said they would not go along.

More meetings were scheduled for Thursday, but Scalise seemed to lose his colleagues' confidence by the minute. In one-on-one meetings with the holdouts, he failed to win them over. (Gaetz was not one of them; he vowed to support whomever his colleagues chose and declared, "Long live Speaker Scalise!")

Finally, just before 8 p.m. on Thursday, Scalise said he would withdraw from consideration for the speakership. "Our conference still has to come together, and it is not there," he said. He noted that, having survived being shot at a congressional baseball practice and be-

ing in the process of battling blood cancer, he has his priorities straight.

By Friday, the chaos was enough to make even the long-time fantasy of a "West Wing solution"—a group of moderate Democrats and Republicans coming together to chart a compromise course—start to seem realistic. But congressional plans for such an arrangement had yet to take shape, and predictably neither side wanted to make the first move. Instead, Democrats and Republicans preferred to give indignant public statements about their theoretical willingness to compromise if only the other side would do so first.

As the members filtered out of the Capitol late Friday, there was little hope for a breakthrough. "America collectively may indeed say, 'We handed you the reins of power in the House of Representatives, and this is what we got for it,'" said GOP Rep. Steve Womack of Arkansas. "It wouldn't surprise me if they don't demand it back."

—Katy Stech Ferek contributed to this article.

Republicans continued to feud with no end in sight Friday.

★ Divided G.O.P. Nominates Jordan for Speaker

By LUKE BROADWATER

WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Friday nominated Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, the hard-right chairman of the Judiciary Committee, to be their next speaker, but quickly postponed a floor vote to elect him as scores of their members refused to commit to backing him.

By a vote of 124 to 81, Mr. Jordan defeated Representative Austin Scott of Georgia, a mainstream conservative and an ally of the ousted former Speaker Kevin McCarthy who had decided just hours earlier to seek the nomination. Mr. Scott had effectively put himself forward as a protest candidate against Mr. Jordan, the co-founder of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus and a favorite of former President Donald J. Trump's.

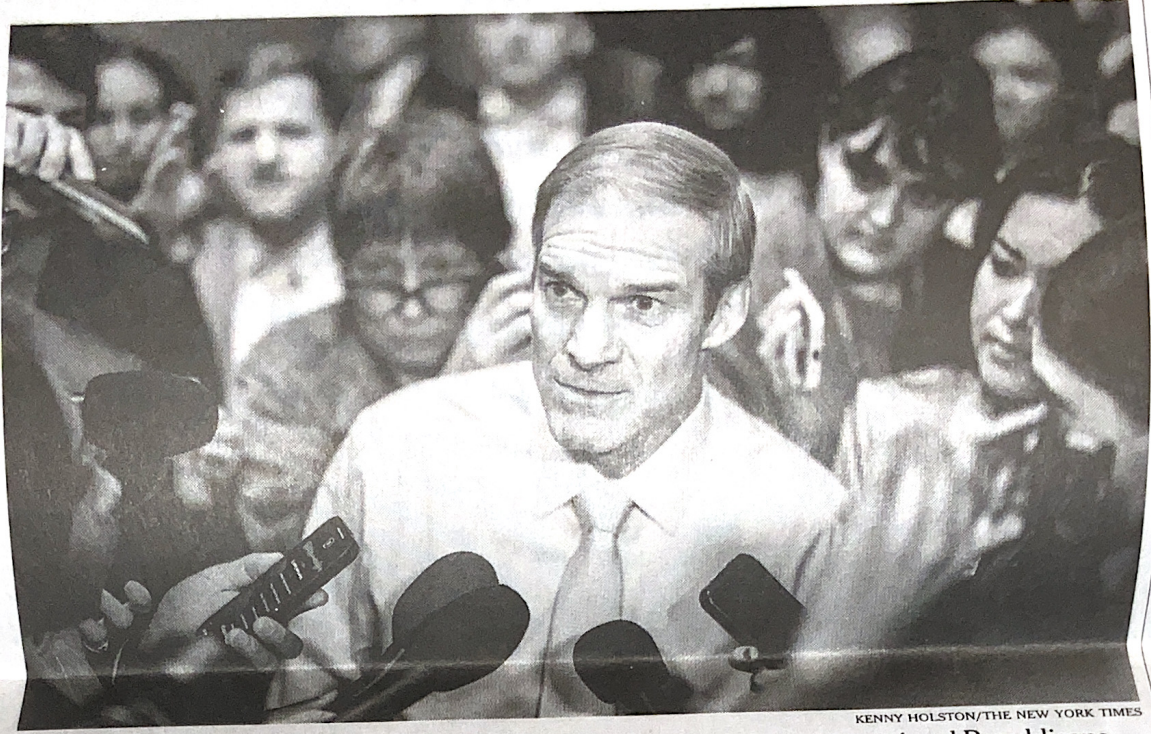
But while Mr. Jordan won the contest, his quest for the speakership still faced serious challenges. A second secret-ballot vote revealed that a sizable chunk of Republicans did not intend to support him on the floor, where he needs 217 votes to win the gavel. It was a continuation of the bitter party infighting that has broken out in recent days, paralyzing the House.

After a week of turmoil and disarray, Republicans sent their members home for the weekend late Friday afternoon with no resolution and no sense of when the feuding might end. Mr. Jordan hoped to flip enough members for a vote on the House floor on Tuesday, but with G.O.P. lawmakers seemingly unable to reach consensus, it was not clear whether he could succeed.

"I think it's a very difficult math equation for him to overcome," said Representative Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida. "He deserves the opportunity to try to see if he can get that math better. The math is not good for him right now."

After Mr. Jordan won the nomination, Republicans held another vote to gauge how many in their ranks were willing to vote for him on the floor. The results were discouraging; 152 said they would, while 55 said they would oppose him. It underscored the deep divisions among Republicans and how far they have strayed from congressional tradition, which normally dictates that once an internal party contest ends, members rally behind the victor.

Mr. Jordan's nomination — and the swift repudiation of him by some of his colleagues — came a



KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jim Jordan has the support of the rebels, but he faces resistance from conventional Republicans.

little over a week after a faction of his supporters forced out Mr. McCarthy and then refused to back the party's initial chosen successor for the post, Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, who abruptly withdrew on Thursday.

Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky, a supporter of Mr. Jordan, said the delay in taking Mr. Jordan's election to the House floor would ultimately benefit the Ohio Republican. He said it would give the Ohio Republican's detractors time to go home to their districts and hear from base voters who are loyal to Mr. Trump and would urge support for Mr. Jordan.

"The difference between McCarthy's election in January on the floor and this election is that it was popular to vote against McCarthy with the base in January. It is popular to vote for Jim Jordan with the base," Mr. Massie said, adding: "Jim Jordan has some work to do. But he's got several days to do that, to bring people on board, to talk with them about their concerns."

Still, there were deep reservations about Mr. Jordan inside the Republican conference. Should he succeed in drawing a majority on the House floor, he would be second in line to the presidency, capping a remarkable rise for a rabble-rousing Republican popular with the party's far-right base. He is a co-leader of the impeachment inquiry against President Biden and played a key role in helping plan Mr. Trump's effort to overturn the 2020 election results in Congress on Jan. 6, 2021. His

combative style and distaste for compromise has tormented past G.O.P. speakers.

Representative Ann Wagner of Missouri called Mr. Jordan's candidacy a "nonstarter." Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska, who represents a district won by Mr. Biden, said lawmakers were worried about caving to the whims of the hard-right members who had forced Mr. McCarthy from the speakership and then refused to back Mr. Scalise.

"The fact is: If you reward bad behavior, you're going to get more of it," Mr. Bacon said.

Mr. Scalise had surpassed Mr. Jordan during an internal party contest on Wednesday by just 14 votes. But rather than consolidating his narrow base of backers, Mr. Scalise almost immediately began hemorrhaging supporters, as lawmakers from several factions said they did not intend to fall into line behind him. He pulled out of the race about 30 hours later.

Mr. Jordan and his supporters hoped to avoid a similar fate, and Mr. Scott quickly indicated that he planned to back him, but it was not clear whether enough other Republicans would follow suit.

It was evident immediately that Mr. Jordan's candidacy would get no help from Democrats, who view him as a loyal foot soldier for Mr. Trump who helped instigate the attack on the Capitol.

"At every single turn, Jim Jordan has prioritized politics, power, fear, division, hate over the American people," said Representative

Katherine M. Clark of Massachusetts, the Democratic whip. "Every Republican who casts their vote for him is siding with an insurrectionist against our democracy."

Some members of both parties, foreseeing a fight that could drag on for weeks, were also discussing how they might give Representative Patrick T. McHenry of North Carolina — the temporary speaker whose role is primarily to hold an election for a speaker — more power to carry out the chamber's work until the conflict could be resolved.

Mr. McHenry demurred on questions about his elevation, and said he was working to get Mr. Jordan seated.

"I worked for Leader Scalise to be speaker, and I'll do the same work for Chairman Jordan," Mr. McHenry said.

But Democrats urged Republicans to abandon Mr. Jordan and their tortured efforts to choose a leader and form a coalition government with them.

"Republicans continue to triple down on the chaos, the dysfunction and the extremism that has been visited upon the American people as a result of the House Republican civil war," said Representative Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York and the minority leader. "Traditional Republicans can break away from the extremism, partner with Democrats on an enlightened bipartisan path forward, so we can end the recklessness and get back to doing the business of the American people."

Reporting was contributed by Annie Karni, Catie Edmondson, Karoun Demirjian and Robert Jimison.